



## **PUBLIC SPACE APPLICATION REVIEW**

**DATE: July 15, 2010**

**FROM: Joshua Ghaffari, Citywide Planner**

**ADDRESS: 1025 First Street, SE**

**APPLICATION: Unenclosed sidewalk café for 4 tables and 16 seats**

### **Site Information**

**Zone: C-3-C**

**Historic District: No**

**CFA: No**

**Neighborhood Character: Mixed-use**

### **Background:**

This application was received by the Office of Planning on June 2, 2010. This café is for the adjacent Justin's Café.

### **Relevant Policies of Planning Initiatives**

#### **Policy T-2.4.4: Sidewalk Obstructions**

Locate sidewalk cafes and other intrusions into the sidewalk so that they do not present impediments to safe and efficient pedestrian passage. Maintain sidewalk surfaces and elevations so that disabled or elderly pedestrians can safely use them. 410.8

#### **Policy UD-3.1.8: Neighborhood Public Space**

Provide urban squares, public plazas, and similar areas that stimulate vibrant pedestrian street life and provide a focus for community activities. Encourage the "activation" of such spaces through the design of adjacent structures; for example, through the location of shop entrances, window displays, awnings, and outdoor dining areas.

#### **Policy UD-3.10: Sidewalk Cafes**

Discourage the enclosure of sidewalk cafes in manner that effectively transforms them into indoor floor space. The design of sidewalk cafes should be compatible with the architectural qualities of the adjoining buildings, should complement the street environment, and should not impede pedestrian movement.

### **KEY ISSUES**

The property is located in the Capitol Riverfront neighborhood on 1st Street, SE, between L and K Streets, SE. It is located in an area zoned C-3-C. There is moderate level of pedestrian activity during working hours and at other times. This neighborhood is predominantly characterized as mixed-use residential and commercial.

The sidewalk where the proposed café is located is along 1st Street and 20 feet wide. The adjacent business has no shop window projection. There are 5 feet at the curb set aside for tree boxes and other street furniture. The proposed seating area includes 4 tables and 16 seats in an area that is 300 square feet.

The café area extends into the sidewalk 9 feet. This leaves 6 feet of unobstructed sidewalk between the café and the 5 foot furniture zone at the curb. District regulations require a 10' clear pedestrian path adjacent to a sidewalk café, although the Public Space Committee has the authority to approve an adjacent clear pedestrian path as narrow as 6 feet. The clear pedestrian path should be a minimum of 8' due to the high density future development for this neighborhood.

The Public Space Committee requires that there be 15 square feet for every seat within a dining area. With an area of 300 square feet, this sidewalk café has enough space for 20 seats; the application is for 16 seats.

In addition, the café seating extends beyond the storefront and adjacent to a neighboring vacant lot. The café seating must remain along the storefront of the adjacent business unless the applicant has written permission from the owner of the vacant lot. This could have implications for the size of the café area and number of seats.

### **SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION**

Sidewalk cafes are one of the few ways that the District can activate public space in commercial areas. Wherever possible, the Office of Planning supports sidewalk cafes in public space. However, the square footage and the number of seats need to be reduced in order to provide a minimum 8' clear pedestrian path.

The café needs to be reduced from extending 9 feet to only 7 feet into the sidewalk, which will provide an adjacent 8' clear pedestrian path. The reduced dimensions for the café would be 7 feet by 15 feet, resulting in a new square foot area of 105 for the café that will allow a maximum of 7 seats. This also assumes the café seating area will extend beyond the front of the adjacent business to in front of the adjacent vacant lot.

**The Office of Planning recommends that this application be approved with the conditions that the sidewalk cafe square footage be reduced to a maximum of 105, which allows for an adjacent 8' clear pedestrian path and a maximum of 7 seats. In addition, the seating should only be located along the storefront unless written authorization is granted from the owner of the neighboring vacant lot.**